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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the review reported here is to identify what has been and is being done in formally recognizing the educational and career relevance of the skills and competencies which women learn from their life experiences. Methodology noted includes survey of published literature and interviews with organizations, projects, and individuals to determine approaches and techniques for accrediting experience. Focus is on the kinds of learning that take place outside the usual formal instruction offered in school or college--prior learning as opposed to school-sponsored experiential learning. Topics under which findings are presented include accredited prior classroom and experiential learning, noncredit prior classroom learning, colleges' recognition of nonclassroom prior learning, and transferability of nonclassroom prior experience learning into paid employment. Conclusions presented are as follows: the main approaches used by educational institutions to assess prior experience learning are (1) course or program evaluation, (2) credit by examination, and (3) portfolio development. Portfolio development is considered the optimum because of its flexibility, but because of its individualization it involves more time and higher costs. Credit by examination works best when there is good correspondence between content of exam and scope of experience. Course/program evaluation is possible only for prior learning involving formal instruction. The main approach used to relate women's prior learning to employment involves matching individual competencies with job competencies. (JT)

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THE TRANSFERABILITY OF WOMEN'S LIFE EXPERIENCE COMPETENCIES TO EMPLOYMENT AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION: A STATE-OF-THE-ART REVIEW

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The Transferability of Women's Life Experience Competencies
to Employment and Vocational Education:
A State-of-the-Art Review

The purpose of this review is to identify what has been and is being done in formally recognizing the educational and career relevance of the skills and competencies which women learn from their life experiences. The review involves a survey of the published literature on women's experiential learning and its relevance to employment and vocational education. It also involves interviews with a number of organizations, projects, and individuals to determine the approaches and techniques to accrediting women's life experiences that are being used, that are needed, and that best meet the needs of women, educators, and employers. The information in this review will be used in designing a system which will further the credentialing of women's life experiences.

Defining the Scope of this Review. This review will focus on the kinds of learning that take place outside of the usual formal instruction offered in a school or college classroom. Our major emphasis will be on prior learning. We will not cover sponsored experiential learning, such as field work and internships, which colleges offer with the cooperation of other organizations as part of an instructional program.

It is important to point out here that the crucial part of experiential learning is the learning. Two individuals may spend the same amount of time on an experience, whether in the classroom or outside, but will leave that experience with different amounts of learning. For this reason, as will be demonstrated later in this review, most experiential learning programs do not equate the amount of time spent in an experience with what has been learned from that experience. Instead, these programs have some type of assessment

procedure to identify the breadth and depth of knowledge which the individual has acquired.

There are two basic types of prior learning (Sosdian & Sharp, 1977): "(1) prior classroom or institutional sponsored learning, usually in the form of courses and programs completed at other institutions, including programs offered at military bases, in places of employment, in community settings, etc., and (2) prior experiential learning, which did not take place in a classroom setting and was not sponsored by an educational institution, but was acquired through work experience (including volunteer work), self-study, etc."

Prior experiential learning, because it does not occur under the sponsorship or supervision of faculty or employers, presents special problems. It is necessary to obtain sufficient information about the experience to be able to describe and assess it and also to relate the information about the characteristics and quality of this experience to the standards and requirements held by individual employers and by educational institutions and programs. Individuals may fail to receive recognition of prior experience learning because they do not recognize that an activity was a learning experience (identification), because they or the educator/employer are unable to see or demonstrate the articulation between the experience and the job or educational program, because of inadequate techniques for documentation and assessment of the nature and extent of the learning, or because the educational institution or employer is concerned about the financial aspects of such credentialing (such as foregoing the income derived from the instruction and/or covering the costs of the assessment).

Accredited Prior Classroom Learning. This type of prior learning involves formal, credit-bearing courses. It does not include the non-credit courses and instruction offered by businesses, volunteer organizations, and educational institutions.

The transferability of credit from one educational institution to another is relatively straight-forward. The credit receiving institution determines the status of the credit transfering institution (e.g., if it is recognized by a regional accrediting association, if the program involved is recognized by the appropriate professional accrediting association, etc.) and reaches a decision as to whether or not they will accept the credits. Typically, the credit receiving institution places a limit on the number of credits it will accept from other institutions. Employers rarely raise questions about credits for classroom learning from different educational institutions except to determine if the institution is accredited in some way or if the training program is recognized by an appropriate professional group.

Accredited Prior Experiential Learning. Even when the prior learning is experiential in nature, rather than involving classroom learning, there appears to be little difficulty in transfering it from one institution to another or in having this kind of learning accepted by an employer once the experience has been accredited by some educational institution.

A landmark study of the external degree as a credential has been conducted by Sosdian and Sharp (1978a, 1978b). External degree programs, as defined by these authors, are those emphasizing minimal classroom

coursework and allowing for considerable transfer credit from prior learning. This study, which is based on a survey of students from 244 external degree programs, found that almost all students (97%) who applied for further study were accepted. Eleven percent did, however, encounter some problems in the application process. Problems were encountered by women more frequently (19%) than by men (8%); this may be related to differences in the types of experiential learning presented by women and by men, but the report presents no evidence to support or refute this. The problems included needing to submit additional letters of recommendation, having a personal interview when such interviews are not typically required, having to take standardized examinations not required of others, or having to present higher scores on required examinations than graduates of traditional programs. Thirty percent of the external degree students entering graduate schools found that the use of a nontraditional, narrative transcript presented some difficulties (a similar finding was reported by Zanville, in a 1976 study of graduate and professional school receptivity to nontraditional student applicants). Sosdian and Sharp also surveyed employers to ascertain their attitudes toward external degrees. There was no indication that employers favored graduates of traditional education programs over those from external degree programs. Sosdian and Sharp state that "our survey data do strongly suggest that employers--although favorably disposed towards education in general--as a group are not overly concerned with institutional reputation, and that external degree holders should not find themselves denied opportunities in employment settings because of the nature of their degree."

Empire State College has also studied the post-baccalaureate success of its graduates in graduate school and in work (Lehmann, 1974). Although 45% of the graduates of this external degree program experienced some problems in applying to graduate schools, three-quarters of those who applied for further education were eventually accepted; only 16% of those who applied to graduate school were rejected. More problems were experienced in gaining acceptance to graduate schools outside of New York State. The problems were largely because, at this time, Empire State was a new, nontraditional college and had not received full accreditation. Another problem was because the nontraditional transcripts (called Digests and Evaluations) used at Empire State could not easily be translated into credits by the graduate schools. In work, over half (53%) of the graduates said their employment circumstances improved as a result of obtaining the degree; these improvements included higher pay, greater job responsibilities, increased professional status, and job promotion. Most (62%) of these improvements in employment circumstances did not involve a change of employer. Because there was no separate analysis by sex, it is impossible to determine if women experienced any more difficulty than men in receiving graduate school admission or in improving their employment.

We hypothesize that one major reason why external degrees and other college programs involving prior learning are so readily accepted is that many colleges offering external degrees are accredited by one of the regional associations. Several of these associations have developed guidelines for crediting prior learning. These guidelines, which will be discussed in a later section of this paper, offer a set of common beliefs

and understandings which facilitate the transfer of credits from one institution to another.

Noncredit Prior Classroom Learning. The assessment of the transferability of learning from noncredit courses, especially those given outside of educational programs and institutions, is more complex. This process has been facilitated by recent work carried out by the American Council on Education (1978) and by the University of the State of New York (1974). These programs carry out formal assessment of businesses' and volunteer organizations' training programs. This assessment, based on the course syllabus, instructional materials, course duration, procedures for student evaluation, background information about the students in the course, and the criteria for instructor selection, is conducted by a review team of three or more persons who also visit the organization sponsoring the course. The assessment results in a recommendation as to whether or not this course is equivalent to college courses and, if it is equivalent, the type and/or level (vocational education, lower division baccalaureate/associate, upper division baccalaureate, or graduate) and the number of credits recommended. More details about the ACE program are given in Appendix A.

The 1978 edition of The National Guide to Credit Recommendations for Noncollegiate Courses (ACE) carries statements from the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRO) and from the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation (COPA); these statements of support help to facilitate the acceptance of academic credit from noncollegiate instruction. Most of the courses listed in the 1978 Guide are sponsored by

business or government; hence, they involve only women who have paid work experience. The Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) is one of the few volunteer organizations sponsoring courses listed in the Guide and the only volunteer organization specifically relevant to women. Another ACE publication, Guide to Evaluation of Educational Experiences in the Armed Services, is also widely used. A recent survey (Knapp & Davis, in press) found that 61% of colleges which are members of the Council for the Advancement of Experiential Learning (CAEL) and 27% of a sample of nonCAEL colleges use the Guide to Educational Programs in Non-Collegiate Organizations in their programs to grant academic recognition for prior learning; 78.5% of CAEL colleges and 50% of nonCAEL colleges use the Guide to Evaluation of Educational Experiences in the Armed Services for granting academic credit for this type of prior learning.

Credentialing of noncollegiate courses and programs of instruction does not have to be limited to those listed in the above-mentioned ACE and New York Regents Guides. The Department of Labor has produced an excellent guide for the awarding of academic credit under the Youth Employment and Demonstration Projects Act of 1977 (U.S. Department of Labor, 1977). This guide discusses three ways in which credit is granted for work experience: (1) course evaluation, (2) credit for prior learning, and (3) experience designed for credit (sponsored). The advantages of and problems with each approach are discussed. As this report notes, program evaluation is a relatively simple method for awarding academic credit, but it requires that the quality of the instruction or work program can be guaranteed and that the program is monitored at intervals to ensure that

the quality of the learning opportunity is maintained. However, program or course evaluation "does not allow for the assessment of individual competencies to assure that expected competencies have been learned."

There appears to be no research which investigates the extent to which employers who sponsor noncollegiate instructional programs are willing to accept similar courses when they hire new employess. Of special interest in such a study would be the willingness of employers to accept courses offered under nonbusiness sponsorship, especially the sponsorship of volunteer organizations. It seems highly desirable that employers who have their instructional programs recognized provide recognition of other programs which have been similarly accredited. If there is not such reciprocal recognition and if there is differential treatment by employers of courses provided by business and by volunteer organizations, women may be less able to transfer their non-market training to paid employment.

Colleges' Recognition of Nonclassroom Prior Learning. Formal classroom instruction and training programs are only a small part of the kinds of experience from which individuals learn. For this reason, and because of the difficulty in determining the competencies of an individual on the basis of the instruction to which s/he has been exposed, alternative approaches to the accrediting of prior learning have been developed.

In the early days of the movement to recognize prior experiential learning, there was considerable concern that if every educational institution developed its own standards and criteria for the accrediting of prior learning, chaos would result. Consequently, several accrediting associations developed guidelines for awarding academic credit for prior learning. An example of such guidelines is given in Appendix B.

A recent survey (Knapp & Davis, in press) has investigated the current scope and varieties of experiential learning recognized in all institutions which are members of the Council for the Advancement of Experiential Learning (CAEL) and in a systematic sample of nonCAEL institutions. The results indicate that 47% of the CAEL institutions have a fully operational program or set of procedures for recognizing prior learning, that another 26% have a pilot program for recognizing prior learning, and that 6% are in the process of planning a program or procedure. Among the nonCAEL institutions sampled, 39% have fully operational programs for the recognition of prior experience learning, 12.5% have a pilot program, and 9% are planning to develop a program.

Knapp and Davis state that 86% of the CAEL institutions and 76% of the nonCAEL institutions which have an operational or pilot program for recognizing prior experience learning use various assessment procedures for giving credit. Table 1 details the types of procedures used in such assessments.

In addition to the awarding of credit for courses and programs which have been assessed by groups like ACE, the two main approaches to assessing prior learning are: (1) credit by examination, and (2) portfolio assessment.

Credit by examination approaches may involve standardized examinations intended specifically for this purpose, such as those in the College Entrance Examination Board's College Level Examination Program (CLEP), other standardized examinations, or faculty developed examinations. A major difficulty with this approach, especially for women, is finding

Table 1

Percent of CAEL and NonCAEL Institutions Using Various Procedures for Granting Academic Recognition for Nonsponsored Learning

	CAEL				NonCAEL			
	Public				Public			
	2-yr	4-yr	Private	Total	2-yr	4-yr	Private	Total
N	36	56	57	149	21	14	27	62
College Level Examination Program (CLEP)	100.0	98.2	98.2	98.7	85.7	100.0	88.9	90.3
College Proficiency Examination Program (CPEP)	33.3	32.1	47.4	38.3	19.0	28.6	14.8	19.4
Standardized proficiency tests other than CLEP or CPEP	33.3	35.7	35.7	35.1	28.6	35.7	14.8	24.2
Faculty-made tests	88.9	85.7	80.7	84.6	85.7	92.9	55.6	74.2
Credit recommendations from Guide to Educational Programs in Non-Collegiate Organizations*	63.9	53.6	66.7	61.1	33.3	14.3	29.6	27.4
Credit recommendations from Guide to Evaluation of Educational Experiences in the Armed Services*	83.3	78.6	75.4	78.5	52.4	42.9	51.9	50.0
Portfolio Assessment	66.7	71.4	87.7	76.5	47.6	50.0	44.4	46.8
Individual Assessment that does not require the preparation of a portfolio	25.0	26.8	26.3	26.2	28.6	21.4	22.2	24.2
Other	8.3	10.7	5.3	8.1	14.3	21.4	3.7	11.3

*Published by the American Council on Education

standardized tests or faculty-developed examinations in which the content closely parallels the content of the prior learning experience. This approach seems to work best when the prior learning involves self-study of a particular topic via reading, TV instruction, and similar techniques. The use of faculty-developed course examinations for credit-by-examination assessment of prior learning further assumes that there is close correspondence between the content of a particular college course and an individual's prior learning experience. Some standardized testing programs include both area tests, which allow students to obtain credit in a field of study such as Humanities or Social Sciences, and more specific subject matter examinations which parallel particular courses. Research (Abraham, 1975) on women who have earned credits by taking CLEP indicates that they subsequently made higher grades than did males who also earned credits in this manner. Another similar study (Fagin, 1971) found that re-entry women and college freshmen did not score significantly differently on the Social Sciences portion of CLEP; there were significant differences, favoring the freshmen, on the English and Natural Sciences sections.

The portfolio development process is probably best described in Assessing Prior Learning: A CAEL Student Guide (Forrest, 1977) and in the companion volume for faculty use. The Student Guide lists the following significant life experience areas for use in the first step of portfolio development, identification of prior learning. These areas are: (1) paid work, (2) homemaking, including child rearing, (3) volunteer experiences, including community activities and elected offices held without pay, (4) noncredit courses and seminars, (5) travel, (6) recreational

activities and hobbies, (7) independent reading, viewing, and listening, and (8) conversations with experts. The other steps in portfolio development and assessment involve articulation of the identified prior learning with the educational program of the institution, documentation of the learning experiences, measurement of the learning, evaluation of the measurement evidence and relating this to institutional standards, and the award of credit. Many colleges have specific courses of instruction to help students develop their portfolio.

There is little information to help educators determine the range of life experiences women have and the extent to which women perceive these as academically relevant. An unpublished survey of women's perceptions of the academic relevance of their homemaking and volunteer work experience was conducted by Ekstrom and Lockheed (1975) under a research grant from the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education. The most frequent homemaking activities were laundry and housecleaning. However, the homemaking activities rated highest as learning experiences were child care and family financial planning and budgeting. The women described the following financial competencies which they learned from homemaking" "I can evaluate services, goods, and purchases," "I know how to plan and budget to get the most for my money," "Handling family finances has taught me budgeting, setting priorities, identifying quality and how to set realistic goals," "Following my husband's bankruptcy I took over the family finances and learned how to deal with all sorts of agencies and institutions; I have fought with credit agencies to regain my standing," "I have learned how to balance a budget, to keep books up to trial balance, do state and federal

income taxes, and plan savings, investments, and tax shelters." In the volunteer work realm, the most frequent activities were holding office in an organization, teaching/tutoring, political activities, clerical activities, fund raising, writing for publication and public speaking, and leading cultural, recreational, or youth groups. The women perceived holding office in organizations and teaching/tutoring as the most valuable learning experiences. The following are some of the administrative competencies which these women acquired: "I learned how to take the final responsibility for decisions," "I learned how to motivate others, parliamentary procedure, how to plan and supervise writing and publicity, and how to put together a budget," "I learned how to delegate authority, when to exercise authority and when to have a democratic process, and how to choose the right person for the right spot," "I learned how to raise money, how to contact legislators and keep abreast of current legislation, and how to run meetings on schedule and keep them to the point." The women also indicated that reading, watching TV, recreation, and hobbies were important learning experiences. Eighty-one percent of the women in this survey felt that their volunteer work and homemaking experiences should be given college credit. Almost all (97.5%) felt that a program which gave women academic credit for volunteer work and homemaking experiences would encourage mature women to attend college.

Another survey which focused on homemaking skills was conducted by Nickse (1975). Twenty-four academic institutions were asked to indicate the extent to which ten competency areas were related to their curriculum. The results are shown in Table 2. As can be seen, all of the competency

Table 2

Mean Weighted Scores of Homemaking Competencies for Academic Credit

Competency	Credit Level*
1) Community resources	1.69
2) Decision making	1.66
3) Goal setting	1.63
4) Interpersonal relations	1.62
5) Physical environments	1.62
6) Human development	1.53
7) Understanding self	1.50
8) Business and family finance	1.21
9) Home health	1.09
10) Goods and services	.94

*Credit Level: Secondary = 0; Postsecondary Years 1 & 2 = 1; Postsecondary Years 3 & 4 = 2

areas except goods and services were judged to be equivalent to college level courses; seven of the ten competency areas were considered equivalent to course offerings at the upper division level.

Another analysis of homemaking skills is the Colorado Homemaker Task Analysis (Abt & Lewis, 1977, 1978). This project is analyzing the occupation of homemaking in order to help vocational educators in the consumer and homemaking field make the content of their programs more relevant. The project final report is not yet available but the interim reports are helpful in showing how the homemaker job varies for married homemakers, single parents, homemakers without children, low income homemakers, rural homemakers, male homemakers, and for Black, Hispanic, and Native American homemakers.

As aids to the identification of women's prior learning experience, Educational Testing Service (ETS) and the Council of National Organizations for Adult Education (CNO) have developed "I Can" competency lists. These lists include: administrator/manager, financial manager, personnel manager, trainer, advocate/change agent, public relations, problem surveyor, researcher, fund raiser, counselor, youth group leader, group leader for a service organization, museum staff assistant, tutor/teachers' aide, manager of home finances, home nutritionist, home child caretaker, home designer and maintainer, home clothing and textile specialist, and home horticulturist. Other lists are being developed by ETS under a grant from the Women's Educational Equity Act Program. The steps involved in awarding college credit for women's life experiences using t[illegible] Can" lists are given in Table 3.

Table 3

Twelve Steps for Awarding Credit Using "I CAN" Lists

Phase I - Initial Counseling

Step 1 - Identify student goals
- admission as matriculated/non-matriculated student
- full-time/part-time
- degree program
- credit for prior learning

Step 2 - Identify related background of student
- college experience
- non-formal learning experience
  - employment
  - volunteer
  - home
  - travel

Step 3 - Complete application, including transcripts, financial aid, recommendations

Phase II - Initiate Procedures for Accrediting Prior Learning

Step 4 - Identify learning experiences (student and counselor)

Step 5 - Identify skills underlying experiences - use I CAN List

Step 6 - Cluster and label related skills - use I CAN List

Step 7 - Determine resources available for documentation of experiences

Phase III - Assessment for Credits

Step 8 - Determine relevant area(s), courses, or departments for awarding credit

Step 9 - Determine method of assessment: credit-by-examination, portfolio, demonstration, etc.

Step 10 - Form evaluation team
- faculty
- counselor
- student

Step 11 - Write assessment agreement

Step 12 - Documentation, measurement, and evaluation

Phase IV - Getting It on the Transcript

(Award of credit is unique to each school--involves payment for credits, selecting relevant course titles, assigning special numbers for "life experiences," etc.)

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Appendix C presents sample portfolio materials prepared for academic credit in the area of women's studies and based on women's life experience learning (Sackmary & Hedrick, 1977). Other samples of approaches and materials specific to women's homemaking and volunteer work skills may be found in Ekstrom, Harris, and Lockheed (1977) and in Ekstrom (1978).

Other informal approaches, such as faculty interviewing of students, may also be used to evaluate women's prior experience learning, either alone or as part of portfolio development and assessment. This approach is used at Minnesota Metropolitan College. The questions which are used are given in Appendix D.

Other approaches for recognizing prior learning are also used, but less extensively and may not involve the awarding of credit. For example, 5% of the CAEL institutions and 11% of the nonCAEL institutions exempt students from courses rather than awarding credit (Knapp & Davis, in press). Institutions which are not credit based incorporate prior experiential learning into degree contracts.

Almost all institutions place a ceiling on the number of credits which students can receive for prior experience learning. The modal amount, for both CAEL and nonCAEL institutions, is about 21 to 30% of the degree requirement credits. In reality, the modal amount of credit for prior experience learning is about 11 to 20% of the degree requirement credits in CAEL institutions but only 5 to 10% of the degree requirement credits in nonCAEL institutions.

An excellent review of the interature pertaining to academic credit for prior off-campus learning has been made by Trivett (1975). As he

points out, the mechanisms for granting credit rely heavily on the judgment of one or more evaluators. While this does not differ from the grading process in the classroom, it does necessitate a set of externally acknowledged standards that classroom evaluation does not have.

Not all colleges recognize that women's life experiences, especially the skills and learning involved in homemaking and child rearing, are academically relevant. This is probably due to sex-role stereotyping and to the image of homemaking as low-skilled. Institutions and departments may make apparently arbitrary rules and regulations as to the types of experience which they consider relevant and appropriate.

The Knapp and Davis survey does not provide any information about the number of colleges which recognize the learning which women acquire from life experiences such as homemaking and volunteer work. An informal conversation with CAEL in the spring of 1978 suggested that there are between 100 and 200 CAEL member institutions which offer recognition of this type of learning.

We could locate no survey which provides information about the rates at which women and men apply for and receive academic credit for prior learning experiences. An early survey conducted by CAEL (1974) showed that 32% of the colleges awarded prior learning credit for work experience in business, 18% for work experience in public service, 13% for community aid or volunteer work, 15% for community cultural or civic activities (such as theater, orchestra, local or national election), 13% for cross-cultural learning involving travel or an American subculture, and 16% for special accomplishment (such as artistic work); there is no indication of the

extent to which women and men were involved in each category. In the Ekstrom and Lockheed (1975) survey, we found that very few women had tried to obtain college credit for experiential learning from volunteer work or homemaking. Among those who had sought such credit, volunteer work was accepted but homemaking was not.

The value judgments attached to "women's work" may make it difficult for appropriate evaluation of this type of prior experience learning. For example, the College Outcome Measures Project/Activity Inventory (COMP/ACT), currently being field tested by the American College Testing Program as a means for preliminary assessment of adults seeking credit for prior experience learning, states that there are various levels of involvement possible in such learning activities. Sample items indicate that higher values are assigned to activities such as designing a new piece of equipment or revising the technique to manufacture a product than to working with a group to alleviate a community problem or in applying a procedure to a personal or family problem. Similarly, writing an advertising brochure is rated as a "higher" level of involvement than writing a paper on procedures used by local government, and keeping records on an experiment is considered "higher level" than keeping records on a child's development. We would challenge these values and suggest that the quality of the experience is more important than the "level" as defined by these terms.

There is a pressing need for a survey or other research which will help us to determine if, indeed, women are receiving recognition for their life experiences and especially for their non-market work in volunteer

organizations, community service, and homemaking to the same extent as men are receiving recognition for their experiential learning.

Transferability of Nonclassroom Prior Experience Learning into Paid Employment. There are a variety of materials available from counseling groups and programs to help the woman who is entering or re-entering the job market identify and evaluate her prior experience learning. Samples of such materials, from publications prepared by Catalyst, are shown in Appendix E. However, fewer materials exist to help the re-entry woman or an employer match and articulate the relationship between prior learning and a particular job.

Programs which have developed materials and techniques for such articulation are operating at Northeastern University and at Goucher College. Descriptive materials from these programs are contained in Appendix F. In the Northeastern program, the woman seeking employment describes herself in a "Personal Competency Profile" which includes specialized, managerial, and interpersonal tasks in which she has engaged, the special skills involved, and the competencies underlying these skills; this is then related to a "Job Competency Profile," which also involves a description of tasks, skills, and competencies. The Goucher project has women describe themselves in a "Skills Summary" which covers technical, managerial, and social/personal skills and present evidence of how these skills were demonstrated; the "Position Profile" lists the technical, managerial, and social/personal skills which the job requires, describes how these skills are applied, and also describes the objectives to be met or results to be produced in carrying out the job successfully.

Implementation of a system similar to these programs would require careful job analysis as well as good counseling.

There is a need for research to determine the acceptability, to employers and personnel recruiters, of the various forms and ways in which women may present information about their past experiences and learning. Of special interest would be a study to explore if there is any interaction between sex of applicant, type of job (traditional or nontraditional), method of describing experience, and the employment decision.

Nickse's (1975) research has related homemaking competencies to human service jobs. Twenty-nine administrators in human service agencies were asked to rate the relevance of ten homemaking competency domains to jobs held by their professional and paraprofessional staff. The results are shown in Table 4. As can be seen, all of the competencies were rated as essential or desirable for human service workers.

Another research study of the homemaker's job (Arvey & Begalla, 1975) used the Position Analysis Questionnaire (PAQ). Results from 48 homemakers were compared to profiles collected on over 1,000 jobs. The following 20 jobs, listed in order from greatest to least similarity, had the most similar profile scores: patrolman, home economist, airport maintenance chief, kitchen helper, fire fighter, trouble man, instrument-maker helper, electrician foreman, gas plant maintenance foreman, hydroelectric machinery mechanic, transmission mechanic, repair lineman, electric meter repairman, vocational training instructor, gas serviceman, motor and generator inspector, lifeguard, fire captain, switch gear repairman, and consumer service home economist. Although this study helps to highlight the

Table 4

Mean Weighted Scores of Homemaking Competencies
for Human Service Employment

Competency	Professional	Paraprofessional
1) Community resources	1.81	.83
2) Goal setting	1.74	1.17
3) Interpersonal relations	1.68	1.29
4) Understanding self	1.63	1.58
5) Human development	1.61	.78
6) Decision making	1.59	.83
7) Business and family finance	1.52	.92
8) Home health	1.37	1.48
9) Physical environments	.84	.55
10) Goods and services	.57	.73

Scores: 2 = Essential, 1 = Desirable, -1 = Not needed, -2 = Undesirable

technical and complex nature of the homemaker's job, we feel that the job analysis categories of the PAQ (information input, mental processes, work output, relationships with others, and job context and characteristics) are not optimal for analyzing the homemaker's work.

Other approaches to job analysis, such as that used in the Dictionary of Occupational Titles, also tend to misrepresent the work done by women; see, for example, Witt and Naherny (1975). These authors analyzed the traditional female occupations of hospital food service, child care, home health aide, school food service, foster care, and paraprofessional social work and concluded that "the DOT systematically, though not purposely, discriminates against virtually all nondegree, people-oriented women's jobs at great expense to the public in general and to women in particular." Any future research on the transferability of women's prior learning skills to employment must cope with the problem of finding or developing job analysis techniques that are not sex-biased.

A new research study to relate women's volunteer work and homemaking skills to jobs, Project Homemaking and Volunteer Experience (HAVE) Skills, was recently begun at Educational Testing Service under a grant from the Women's Program Staff, U.S. Office of Education. This project is revising the "I Can" competency lists developed for earlier research and developing new lists. After validation of these competencies, a job-competency matrix will be developed.

Another new program now just beginning at the National Manpower Institute's Center for Women and Work, under a grant from the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education, will help women clerical workers

identify their skills and competencies for upward job mobility. Materials being used include the ETS "I Can" competency lists and CAEL's Assessing Occupational Competencies.

Conclusions

There are three main approaches used by educational institutions to assess prior experience learning currently in use. These are: (1) course or program evaluation, (2) credit by examination, and (3) portfolio development and related forms of individualized assessment. In terms of their suitability to women's prior learning, the portfolio development approach is probably optimum since it allows for the greatest flexibility in the types of experiences included and the ways in which these experiences are related to the student's educational program. However, because this system is individualized, it involves more time and higher costs than do the other approaches. Credit by examination works best when there is good correspondence between the content of the examination and the scope of the prior experience learning; however, there are many experiential learning areas where no standardized examination is available or appropriate. Course or program evaluation is possible only for prior learning experiences which involve formal instruction; this type of assessment gives little guidance as to the level of competency (over the minimum required to complete the program) attained by the participating individuals.

The main approach in use in relating women's prior learning to employment involves a matching of individual competencies with job competencies. This approach requires a careful job analysis and cannot

rely on existing analyses which may be biased in their views of work traditionally done by women.

There appears to be no one "best" approach which works equally well for all of women's life experiences and for both education and employment. The more flexible, individualized assessments which identify and match the competencies acquired from experience and those involved in the college course or job seem to hold the most promise for system development.

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